United Nations A/53/PV.17

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

17th plenary meeting
Monday, 28 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Shikhmuradov (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I first call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): I extend my congratulations to Mr. Opertti on his election and my appreciation to the former President for all his work over the last year.

In looking back over the year, I think we would agree that it has been extremely disturbing for most developing nations. At best, it has been one of troubling uncertainty and a deep sense of frustration. At worst, it has seen terror and despair. It is the uncertainty felt by millions in our own region, caught unprepared by the process of globalization and ending up unemployed. It is the frustration experienced by those like the current, third adult generation of Palestinian refugees who declare with understandable defiance that they have suffered enough. It is the terror of the innocent victims of bombings; of those who flee from civil war; or of those, such as the people of Kosovo and Rwanda, who have experienced savage inhumanity. It is the despair of our neighbours in China, Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea, stricken by devastating natural disasters.

For many, many millions of people, the end of this century is not a time for any millennial celebrations. It is a time of enormous human suffering. As many of us remarked at the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, at a time when technology presents greater opportunity for human development than ever before and when the power of globalization offers us unique chances to work together, how can this possibly be?

In trying to answer this question, the Non-Aligned Movement recently spoke of a primary need to voice the suffering of the billions it represents. It also spoke of this Assembly as the only forum in which that voice can be heard with the strength and insistence it deserves.

That is why I would like to thank our Secretary-General, not just for attending the Non-Aligned summit, but also for displaying heartfelt concern for the special problems faced by developing nations. Above all, I would like to thank him for what I feel is crucial in the developing world today, and that is the call he has made for leadership: leadership in ending local hostilities; leadership in making peace processes work; and, perhaps most important of all, leadership in summoning the political will to translate policies made at the national, regional or global level into day-to-day real benefits for ordinary people. It is leadership, in short, aimed at encouraging two things: first, tolerance in the acceptance of differences and the need to resolve all disputes

98-85900 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

peacefully, no matter how hard this may be; and, secondly, in placing people at the core of policy-making.

As the Secretary-General has stated, the United Nations is a place where the connection can be made — one which is so often neglected elsewhere — between economic and social development on the one hand and international peace and security on the other. We entirely agree with him. His observations reflect the need for us to address not policy positions, but ordinary people's problems — jobs, education, food and security — and to address them from their own perspectives and needs.

That is why we very much appreciate the fact that the various conferences this body has hosted within the last 12 months have been directed towards recognizing people and their day-to-day concerns. This is also very much in agreement with the strong appeal we made last year, when, in the context of United Nations reform, we stated that, whatever we do, we have to be sure that nothing weakens what the United Nations does well for ordinary people. By this I mean its work in the field. It is this which gives the Organization meaning to billions. It is the fundamental reason for the existence of the United Nations today, a body founded in the name of "we the peoples".

So, in commending our Secretary-General's efforts, I would also like to give him our full support in fulfilling the peoples' need for economic prosperity and social development, and in ensuring that these two concerns remain firmly connected. This will place the emphasis in the United Nations on work which will reinforce peace and stability, reject violence and confrontation and strengthen the foundation of social development. In other words, nothing in the interests of ordinary people can be solved by violence and war. If they have to exist, let the violence be directed against despair and the war be made on suffering.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am confident that with his vast experience and diplomatic skills in the service of his country, Uruguay, he will be able to steer our deliberations to a fruitful outcome.

May I also take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr. Udovenko, of Ukraine, for the admirable way in which he presided over the last session of the General Assembly.

The global situation continues to be in a state of flux. Six years after the end of the cold war, the world is no more the safe place that we were led to believe it would be. Old conflicts stubbornly persist, while new ones have emerged.

The picture is no better on the disarmament front. Although the signing of the Convention on landmines is a laudable achievement in the field of conventional weapons, the situation on the nuclear disarmament front remains bleak. There has been little or no progress in nuclear disarmament. Indeed, the situation has been aggravated by nuclear tests conducted by two non-signatories of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), posing a grave challenge to the disarmament process. The international community must make every effort to check further erosion of nuclear disarmament regimes, while strengthening and promoting universal adherence to them. In this regard, the nuclear Powers have a special responsibility.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be a source of grave concern. The dismal lack of progress in efforts to bring the Palestine-Israel peace process back on track is a matter of deep disappointment. It portends adverse implications for international peace and security. Lest the positive achievements of recent years be dissipated, all parties concerned must exert every effort to build on the peace agreements that were painstakingly negotiated. Only their continued active engagement in the peace process can influence developments in the right direction. It should be stressed, however, that peace and stability in the region cannot be attained by delaying and frustrating the realization of the just aspirations of the Palestinian people to an independent and sovereign homeland.

We are dismayed by the ongoing unresolved conflict in Afghanistan. The contending parties must realize that a long-term solution to the conflict can be reached not through military means, but through negotiations leading to genuine national reconciliation. We call on them to set aside provincial or sectarian interests, eschew violence and seriously pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in the larger interests of their country and their people. We condemn the violence directed at the personnel of the United Nations, humanitarian organizations and countries concerned.

On a slightly more positive note, Malaysia is pleased about the successful conclusion of the national elections in Cambodia, in which the international community once again played a constructive role. We urge all political parties in Cambodia to close ranks and resolve outstanding problems through dialogue, in the larger national interests of Cambodia. The objective should be the early formation of a Government that fully reflects the wish of the Cambodian people for national reconciliation, pluralism and development, and which will enable Cambodia to partake in constructive regional cooperation with its neighbours.

Recent events have once again emphasized to the international community the continuing threat to peace and security posed by terrorism. Here I refer in particular to the terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, which resulted in the tragic deaths and injuries of many innocent people. Malaysia reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Malaysia will join in efforts to combat terrorism through the strengthening of international cooperation in various fields on the basis of the supremacy of the rule of law. There should be increased cooperation among police and other security and law enforcement agencies of Member States.

At the same time, at the political level, the international community must work towards inculcating the new global culture of peace that the Secretary-General has so eloquently articulated. Malaysia believes that violence begets violence, and the victims will unfortunately be innocent civilians. Indeed, in a world armed with nuclear weapons where the danger of nuclear terrorism is ever present, every effort should be made not only to keep terrorism at bay through enhanced international cooperation but — and this is equally important — to address the root causes. While terrorism may not be entirely eliminated, understanding the reasons for its continued existence will be an important step towards combating it.

Continued instability in parts of Africa is of major concern to our Organization. Malaysia welcomes the increased attention given to Africa by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Malaysia particularly welcomes the initiative taken by the Security Council to highlight the special problems of Africa in the Council earlier this year and in the Council's ministerial meeting on African issues held last Thursday, 24 September. Furthermore, Malaysia welcomes and will actively participate in a similar discussion on Africa at this session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that these discussions will contribute to a greater understanding of the interrelated problems of peace, security and development faced by many African countries. Hopefully, they will lead to more focused and coordinated programmes of international action to overcome those problems. Given the continuing disadvantaged position of Africa, there is a need for sustained efforts on the part of our Organization and its specialized agencies, as well as traditional and new partners of Africa, to assist African countries in their development needs. I am pleased to say that Malaysia, for its part, has been able to make a modest contribution in these efforts through technical cooperation and trade and investment in a number of African countries. Malaysia will continue to do so, within its limited resources, in the spirit of South-South cooperation and solidarity with Africa.

As we grapple with questions of international peace and security, we should be equally concerned by the current state of the global economy. Indeed, we see that the most imminent threat to the well-being of our region today is not political, ideological or military, but economic. It is clearly evident that the financial crisis that descended on East Asian countries over a year ago has brought social misery, political instability and economic turmoil. In certain countries there is now massive unemployment. Economic growth has been severely curtailed, and in fact has contracted. Virtually overnight, the hard-earned gains of decades of hard work, careful planning and prudent management have been wiped out. Millions of people in the region most severely affected by the crisis find that their place is now below the poverty line. Their right to live a life that is free from the scourge of poverty and to have a decent standard of living with some basic necessities has been trampled by the manipulators of the currency markets. Indeed, the super-rich have impoverished the poor. It is ironic that this has happened in the year when we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Though they are pursuing policy responses that are in line with International Monetary Fund requirements, the economies of the affected countries have not recovered. Instead, the contagious effects of the crisis have spread to other regions and are affecting the world economy. We may be sliding towards world recession. We may even be on the verge of a global depression if urgent steps are not taken through international collaboration and cooperation to halt the slide and reverse the trend.

While various factors contributed to the crisis, we have no doubt that the financial turmoil was triggered by speculative attacks on the East Asian currencies and the

resultant reversal of capital flows. The crisis reveals flaws in the market mechanism and raises questions about the relative benefits of liberalization and globalization. Unless these flaws are effectively addressed, the threat of a global depression as devastating as the one that hit the world in the 1930s could confront us. The international community has to act urgently to reform the international financial system to ensure against massive currency attacks, manipulations and frequently excessive fluctuations.

It has been said that the markets would punish those countries which do not possess proper financial structures and disciplines and which lack transparency. But the international financial market itself lacks transparency. In today's financial system, currency valued at more than $1.2 trillion is bought and sold every 24 hours. This trade is largely carried out without any clear rules, and the very Governments whose currencies are being traded are left to fend for themselves in trying to defend the value of their currencies. There is no system of surveillance, no open reporting of any kind and no regulating authority such as the World Trade Organization for this most lucrative trade in the coveted commodity that is money itself. It is now most urgent that the international financial market be reformed. More than that, significant changes should be made to the international financial architecture.

Malaysia has been advocating the need for change over the last year. Initially, this call went unheeded. In September 1997, our Prime Minister said in Hong Kong,

> "A certain degree of uncertainty is fine, but an absolutely uncertain financial world is no good for anyone except of course for those who deliberately create the uncertainty."

It is clear that the situation is becoming increasingly uncertain globally. Increasingly, the experts now agree. A number of Governments also agree. The situation has clearly got out of hand. There has to be change and improvement in the international financial architecture. There must be rules to encourage greater transparency. Financial operators must abide by certain internationally accepted regulations. They must accept closer supervision so as to distinguish between genuine investors and currency speculators. There has to be an earnest effort among Governments to immediately engage in dialogues to revamp the system. We must undertake an immediate collective effort to find a comprehensive and workable solution to what is clearly now a global problem. A few developed countries cannot resolve this problem on their own. A few developed countries cannot forever remain rich and prosperous if more than two thirds of the world's countries remain poor and socially and politically unstable. This is the time to enter into a genuine process of North-South dialogue on an issue of great interest to both. Malaysia welcomes the call by President Clinton for a special discussion in Washington on the financial and economic crisis that the world is facing today.

Meanwhile, in the absence of reforms or internationally well-tested formulas or guidelines, Malaysia has taken steps to impose currency and capital controls in order to insulate its economy from currency uncertainties while at the same time continuing to be active in international trade and to welcome foreign investment.

While countries In East Asia are doing their best to overcome their problems in their respective ways and to ameliorate the plight of their people, it is important that the lessons of East Asia be learned by the rest of the developing world. It is equally important that the international community find consensus to formulate necessary ground rules to keep in check the rapacious nature of financial speculators and manipulators whose only motivation is profit-making and profit-taking. This Assembly, and in particular the Economic and Social Council, can and should also consider this important issue. The United Nations can put its moral weight behind the call for regulating these speculative activities in the interest of protecting or insulating vulnerable developing economies.

In an increasingly interdependent and borderless world, the globalization of trade and commerce is moving apace. However, many developing countries can barely cope with this, given their weak domestic, economic, financial and legal structures. Globalization may be desirable and, perhaps, inevitable and unstoppable as a process and trend. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that unless the developing countries are given time to build up their structures and are actively assisted in the process, they will not be able to participate meaningfully in global free trade, still less compete with their partners from the developed world. In such a situation, globalized free trade would be a patently unfair form of world trade, with the odds stacked against developing countries. Indeed, it would be a continuing form of exploitation of the weak and poor nations by those that are powerful and rich.

Needless to say, in the wake of the sad experience of the East Asian economies, the faith of many

developing countries in globalization has been very much shaken and diminished. Consequently, many developing countries view the prospect of further liberalizing their economies with great caution and trepidation. It is Malaysia's conviction that as we approach the new millennium, relations among States should be based on a new paradigm predicated not only on equal sovereignty but also on respect for dignity and mutuality of interests and benefits. Only on that basis will we be able to reap the full potential of globalization through genuine international dialogue and cooperation.

The enjoyment of human rights is one of the most important principles in the maintenance of justice and peace in the world. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year affords us an opportunity to reflect on both accomplishments and failures in realizing the commitments enshrined in the Declaration. The promise in the Declaration to end cruelty and injustice still remains largely unfulfilled. Similarly, the promise to provide a decent living to all has been threatened by the negative effects of globalization and the inadequate attention given to economic, social and cultural rights.

This fiftieth anniversary coincides with the review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The review will provide us with an opportunity to make a thorough and honest assessment of the successes and failures in implementing the commitments made five years ago. It would be timely for discussions to focus not only on rights but also on obligations. It is imperative that the conferment of rights should be linked to the fulfilment of obligations and clearly defined duties and responsibilities. The imbalance in emphasis between political and civil rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other has to be clearly addressed in order for the promotion, protection and enjoyment of all human rights to be fully achieved.

The right to development, recognized as universal, inalienable and an integral part of fundamental human rights, has not been fully realized. There is still no effective international cooperation to create a true environment of equitable economic relations which would facilitate the realization of this goal.

We may recall that the Secretary-General appropriately designated the last session of this Assembly as the reform Assembly. He tabled his package of reform proposals for our consideration and appropriate action. After much debate, many of these proposals were approved and are now in various stages of implementation. It is hoped that with the implementation of the reform package the Organization will become more action-oriented and more focused on and responsive to the needs of Member States. Certainly, greater rationalization of the plans and actions and more effective management will lead to increased efficiency in programme implementation as well as to better and more effective and efficient utilization of human resources.

Let us continue to give our strong support to the Secretary-General in his continuing efforts to fully and effectively implement his reform proposals. Let us also extend our support to his efforts to strengthen the Organization in ways that will benefit all Member States. Certainly, a positive contribution in this regard is to ensure our continued financial support to the Organization, thereby easing its burdens at a time of increasing demands being made upon it. The establishment of the proposed Revolving Credit Fund might help ease the financial crisis of the United Nations temporarily. In the long term, however, the only effective way of resolving the problem is through the timely payment by Member States of their dues.

What is most disappointing, however, is the lack of any progress in an important aspect of the reform of our Organization. I refer to the discussions on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council in the high-level Working Group of the General Assembly. Individual Member States, as well as groups of States, have made many important proposals on various aspects of the reform and restructuring of the Council, from its enlargement and composition to its working methods, including the use of the veto. Regrettably, all these proposals aimed at making the Council more representative, democratic, transparent and accountable, have not received the desired consensus.

Clearly what is lacking is not ideas and proposals but the necessary political will on the part of Member States, particularly those with strong views on specific aspects of reform of the Council. If the reform and restructuring of the Council continue to elude us in its sixth year of discussion in the Working Group, we have only ourselves to blame for our inability to demonstrate our reasonableness, our goodwill and the necessary compromises required from all of us to break the current impasse. Additional years of continuing with the sterile debate in the Working Group will only increase the creeping sense of cynicism and pessimism among Member States, which would be seriously detrimental to the reform process.

As its contribution to the reform debate, Malaysia reiterates its call for a comprehensive reform and restructuring of the Security Council. We continue to advocate enlargement of the Council in both categories of its membership, permanent and non-permanent, circumscribing, if not totally abolishing, the use of the veto and improving the working methods of the Council, which should include increased transparency, accountability and participation by the larger membership of the Organization through more open debates on issues of importance to the international community.

As the discussions in the Working Group enter their sixth year, it is the earnest hope of my delegation that there will be increased focus, seriousness and urgency on the part of Member States in arriving at a consensus. Otherwise, we will lose forever the remaining window of opportunity to reform the Council. We should remind ourselves that we do not have the luxury of time and that this opportunity for a comprehensive reform of the Council, if not realized, may not present itself again for many years to come.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Malaysia's belief in the importance of these annual debates in the General Assembly and their relevance to our continuing efforts to enhance international cooperation and collaboration at the multilateral level. The statements by Member States in this Assembly serve to inform us and challenge us to further action in pursuit of our common goals. In the final analysis, the future viability of the United Nations will depend on the perception by Member States of the continued relevance of the United Nations to them and on their continuing support for the Organization.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, His Excellency Mr. Domingo Siazon, on whom I now call.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): I am pleased, on behalf of my delegation, to extend to Mr. Opertti our warmest congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

Just three months ago, the Philippines commemorated the centennial of the birth of Asia's first Republic. A month before that the Filipino people conducted the most sacred rite of a democracy: the election of national leaders by popular will. The successful electoral process resulted in the second peaceful transfer of power since our "people power" revolution of 1986. President Joseph Ejercito Estrada, with a resounding mandate from the Filipino people, has taken over the task of leading the Philippines into its second century as a free and democratic nation. But he does so at a very trying time; he must steer the ship of state on very turbulent waters, with global forecasts painting a picture of even more stormy weather ahead.

And the Asian economic crisis rolls on; it is no longer just Asian nor entirely economic. It will wreak havoc anywhere and spare no one. It has already hit the Philippines hard, though perhaps not as badly as some other countries. Yet, for us, the only tenable direction to go is forward; to go back is to founder. Thus, the Estrada Administration's economic policy will remain market-friendly, even as it is pro-poor and pro-business. The Philippines will keep the momentum of economic reform and strengthen in particular its financial and banking sectors.

Like all other States, the Philippines pursues foreign policy to promote national security and development. But we view national security beyond the traditional concerns of sovereignty and territorial integrity. For in a global regime characterized by evolving multipolarity of political and military power and by growing economic and financial interdependence, with all their attendant opportunities and risks, my nation's peace and prosperity increasingly depend on stability and growth abroad. As President Estrada has said, our way of life, our fundamental values and our institutions can flourish and find true expression only if we enjoy political stability, economic solidarity, sociocultural cohesion, moral consensus and ecological balance, at home as well as with our partners in the world. Our national security and development demand that we actively advance the internationally shared goals of freedom, openness, peace, prosperity and justice.

It is in this context that the Philippines regards the United Nations, which it helped found 53 years ago, as a most important partner in our efforts to promote our own national security and development.

Our part of the world, the Asia-Pacific region, is the scene of growing regional cooperation coexisting side by side with regional tensions. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has not only increased its membership but has also expanded its work from the purely economic and social to the security and political fields. It took the lead in creating the ASEAN Regional Forum — the only regional security dialogue mechanism that brings together all the Powers with a stake in peace

and stability in East Asia and the Western Pacific. The Philippines hosted the fifth ASEAN Regional Forum last July and is gratified with the growing trust and confidence among Forum participants and with the progress in the promotion of greater transparency and mutual understanding in the region.

Nevertheless, the Asia-Pacific region is not tension-free. Territorial disputes and issues left over from the Second World War fester. The Philippines hopes that as the new millennium dawns meaningful action towards the resolution of such issues will commence in earnest among the countries concerned.

Peace in the Korean peninsula is essential. The Philippines supports ongoing efforts, including those of the Four-Party Talks and of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), to build the foundations of peace in the Korean peninsula.

Peace in the South China Sea is crucial to peace and prosperity in East Asia. The Philippines encourages all parties concerned to scrupulously observe the principles contained in the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea of 1992.

The ratification of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community augurs well for Africa. The efforts at conflict resolution and prevention by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), deserve to be lauded.

Nonetheless, one cannot escape the fact that the more intense of today's conflicts have occurred in Africa. The tragic events in Rwanda, in Burundi, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in Sierra Leone and now in the Congo are familiar to us all. Although these States are responsible for their future, the recurring and protracted conflicts in Africa demand a multilateral response to the political, economic and social ills of the region, and the need to address development issues is paramount. We also cannot afford to ignore the humanitarian disasters such as those in the Sudan. Indeed, political stability is required in Africa, but so is aid. Let no one in this Hall forget Africa and our collective duty to alleviate human suffering there.

The Philippines firmly hopes that the Middle East peace process will resume in earnest and encompass all relevant parties. We reaffirm the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The growing number of signatures to and ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) raised hopes that nuclear weapons were becoming obsolete. Unfortunately, the nuclear-weapon States have yet to live up to their NPT commitments. Moreover, the recent nuclear tests in South Asia were a destabilizing development.

The proliferation of missile technology and capability is just as fraught with danger, if not more dangerous, than the spread of nuclear weapons. These two make for a deadly combination for everyone; both must be stopped. So, too, must the continuing development and stockpiling of other weapons of mass destruction cease. Likewise, we need to put an end to the unregulated transfer and indiscriminate and often illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons.

The Philippines is also deeply committed to the banning and destruction of anti-personnel landmines. My Government is deeply gratified that our common intense effort to conclude the Convention on anti-personnel mines succeeded last December. We strongly urge States that have not yet done so to sign the Convention. We urge all to assist in landmine clearance and the rehabilitation of landmine victims.

Political instability and the collapse of peace and order in any State produce deleterious effects, including security threats for others. For this reason, the Philippines contributes where it can to the establishment or restoration of political stability in other lands, particularly in support of democracy.

Cambodia's recently held elections have been judged free and fair. But, as recent developments in that country show, democratic elections, while necessary, are not a sufficient condition for democracy or for peace and stability. Cooperation by all Cambodian parties, prompted by a deeper love for the nation's good, is required.

The efforts of the ASEAN troika, the Friends of Cambodia and the United Nations have not been in vain; they have just not been enough. Much could be done by the international community; but so much more needs to be done by the Cambodians themselves to pull their country back from the brink.

The Philippines hopes to see a fully stable South-East Asia, where all peoples enjoy peace and national

reconciliation. We hope to see all 10 countries in the region working together for a united and outward-looking South-East Asia, bonded in a partnership of dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. Thus, we are committed to assisting Myanmar and Laos in their integration into a peaceful, prosperous, humane and just ASEAN.

Peace and order are threatened by the evils of terrorism and transnational crime. Terrorism is a crime against humanity, and we strongly condemn it. Transnational crime in all its guises, including drug-trafficking, trafficking in women and children, and money-laundering, must be stopped. The Philippines joins the rest of the international community in hailing the adoption of the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court. I wish to convey my Government's serious intention to consider the matter of accession to that treaty in the near future.

The world needs economic solidarity. And the Asian crisis, which has spread to other regions, is our immediate global concern. For in its wake, millions of lives have been afflicted, with untold suffering. In its path, nations may fall. The Bretton Woods institutions have played a vital role in the global economy. But it is now clear that their methods and their resources, particularly those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are sorely insufficient to contain the crisis and to restore the health of afflicted economies. We need to replenish IMF resources, augment the funds of the World Bank and the regional banks, and develop new remedies for the new problems of a globalized economy.

The United Nations can play a significant role in fostering international cooperation and action to solve the global crisis and mitigate its effects. Together, we can fight protectionism. The suffering spawned by the crisis must be addressed. The significant decline in official development assistance from donor countries needs to be reversed. Now more than ever, social amelioration programmes and safety nets must be enhanced.

The crisis has forced us, too, to focus attention on the quality of governance. The issues of corruption and cronyism have been catapulted to the top of national debates. The ensuing convergence of ideas and resolve towards greater transparency and a more level playing field, at home and throughout the world, should be boons to our peoples and nations.

The financial crisis has also confronted us with the reality that the world is dealing with a new phenomenon. This is the phenomenon of massive amounts of capital flowing across national borders at lightning speed, bloating economies into fragile bubbles as they rush in and shaking economies to their foundations as they are withdrawn. This is one aspect of globalization that carries great peril. It requires much diligent study and delicate handling.

We have long recognized the need to recast the global trading regime and make it more responsive to the requirements of our time. Our efforts on this are well advanced. Now we must begin the work on the global financial system. Together, we must plan and build a new architecture that best suits today's and tomorrow's needs.

The Philippines welcomes President Clinton's eight-point agenda to lead the world out of the current global economic and financial instability. Real action is what the world, not just Asia, needs urgently. Indeed, threatening clouds are overhead. Lives are needlessly shattered. We need to limit the damage now and start rebuilding as soon as we can.

Another lesson the crisis teaches us is about how brittle and fleeting high growth in gross domestic product is. It is not difficult to associate the roots of civil unrest in the wake of economic hardships with the lack of social justice on the ground. The poor, who get hit first and hardest in any economic downturn, will always be restive if development yields dividends only for the rich. The crisis makes us realize that the fruits of prosperity and the pains of sacrifice must be enjoyed or borne equitably.

The globalization of information and the media may have reduced cultural barriers to the point of homogenizing certain cultural aspects of life. But the world continues to suffer from cultural intolerance. The plight of children, the rights and advancement of women and human rights in general still need to be addressed vigorously by the international community. The continuing exploitation of children for pornography, prostitution and drug-trafficking, not to mention the suffering of displaced and refugee children, is a global problem. The Convention on the Rights of the Child should guide international action in this area. At the regional level, the Philippines and the United Kingdom, under the aegis of the Asia-Europe Meeting, have launched a joint initiative on child welfare with a view to creating a better international cooperation mechanism on this endeavour.

The Philippines attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families, and we continue to call upon all countries to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

All human rights — political, civil, social and economic — are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. So long as any or all of these rights are not respected globally, we cannot rest, even as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the Philippines, the best and surest way to promote social justice and human rights is through a sincere commitment to the rule of law. And one law that is self-evident and immutable in all cultures is the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the human person.

Many of the international commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly Agenda 21, remain unfulfilled. And sadly, no new or additional resources needed by developing countries to implement many of the actions agreed at the Summit have materialized. We appeal for early action on these points.

Sustainable development continues to be an important focus of Philippine foreign policy. As Chair of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Philippines emphasized the role of civil society in the implementation of cooperative activities in key areas such as freshwater resources, the role of industry, technology transfer and capacity-building in development.

Last April, the Philippines signed the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We join other States parties to the Convention in urging the speedy entry into force of that Protocol.

Addressing global challenges and problems requires international action and cooperation. The United Nations remains the principal multilateral forum for the initiation of such action and cooperation. As a founding member, the Philippines recognizes that the United Nations must have the active support of all its Members and adequate resources in order to be effective. We have supported the various reform exercises undertaken in the past years, and we will continue to do so, to ensure the continued relevance of this our reliable partner.

Inasmuch as the overwhelming majority of United Nations members are from the developing world, the United Nations reform process must restore development issues to the core of the United Nations agenda. It should also enable the General Assembly to fulfil effectively its Charter-mandated responsibilities.

There is a pressing need to modernize and reform the Security Council. The Council is the United Nations organ with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and its decisions must be viewed as serving the collective interest of all United Nations Members. Thus, its membership must be enlarged to include more key global players and developing countries. Its working methods and decision-making processes should become more transparent and democratic.

As a democracy, the Philippines is convinced that global efforts and cooperation to achieve peace, prosperity and development can succeed only if democracy thrives within nations and serves as the basis for relations between and among them. At the global level, this requires respect for the principle of sovereign equality among States, the commitment to enrich, not beggar, one another, the need to uphold and defend the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, the pacific settlement of disputes, the promotion of all human rights, and respect for the one and only world we live in. Without exception, all nations need to cooperate and be part of the solution to all the world's woes. For we are all in this together, and there are no others to blame. As Shakespeare admonished, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings" (*Julius Caesar*, Act I, scene 2).

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah.

Mr. Abdullah (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. His election to this distinguished post is a testament to the international community's appreciation of the effective contribution to international affairs made by his country, Uruguay, with which the Sultanate of Oman enjoys good relations of friendship and cooperation. We are confident that under his leadership and considerable diplomatic experience our deliberations here will be crowned with success. My delegation stands ready to cooperate with him fully in order to achieve all the aims envisaged by this session.

May I also take this opportunity to express sincere thanks to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of friendly Ukraine for the exemplary and constructive manner with which he steered the work of the previous session. I would also like to confirm my country's unwavering support for the sustained and dedicated work done by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to enhance and reinvigorate the role of the United Nations and to restructure its principal bodies.

It has now been over half a century since the establishment of the United Nations, during which time it has handled a significant number of international issues. However, the United Nations often remains unable to resolve many regional crises which have erupted since the end of the cold war. In spite of the attention paid to these issues by the international community, the majority of those included in our agenda have remained without effective solutions. It is our view that this is due to the failure and lack of resolve on the part of Member States to utilize the mechanisms of the United Nations which were established on the basis of the Charter.

If this is the case today, how will the future be, when we shall be expected to face more conflicts which may be different in nature and size as compared to old conflicts? We cannot address them in the conventional way. We shall have to examine their root causes and address their manifestations and give full support to the Organization in order to find the means to develop adequate bases for addressing them so as to protect the international community against their recurrence.

The high-level working group of the General Assembly made progress in the area of restructuring and streamlining some of the main organs of the United Nations, in particular with regard to the question of reform and increase in the membership of the Security Council. The setback which the Open-ended Working Group on this question faced during the previous General Assembly session should not stand in the way of achieving further progress. We should not accept retreat from what has already been accomplished. We have to encourage the Working Group to redouble its efforts to complete the scope of the needed reforms of the United Nations in a manner that will meet the aspirations of the international community on the basis of comprehensiveness and equality among all States, which in turn will contribute balance and transparency to the methods of work of the Security Council. This will be a contribution to the decision-making process and to the clarity of vision with regard to the emerging developments in our contemporary world in which justice, security and peace should prevail.

In this way, all Member States, large and small, would be enabled to participate in the resolution of international problems, especially those which have a direct impact on their own interests, in an appropriate and just manner.

The greatest danger facing the Members of the United Nations in the post-cold-war era is represented by some of the unhealthy situations which lead to nearly worldwide economic stagnation and the spread of terrorism and ethnic wars, as I have just indicated. This would jeopardize all the achievements made by humankind in the scientific and technological fields, as well as with regard to the standards of social and economic development, and would lead to an historic era with negative consequences for the future.

The disturbing economic situation in East Asia since the beginning of the financial crisis in the middle of 1997 has generated instability and created political and social upheavals in the region. In spite of the reform measures for economic stability by the concerned States in Asia, with the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the success in restoring stability to the world economy was limited. In fact, we have begun to witness the repercussions of those measures on other economies which were previously immune from them. This is due to the fact that the efforts made were not coherent and did not address the urgent need to take a comprehensive view of the whole crisis, within an equitable international context.

The events that I have outlined emphasize the need for collaborative efforts with a view to the establishment of a fair and equitable global economic system that would cover all goods, technologies and services. We believe that this should be linked to a new system of international financial markets which would be more transparent and efficient and thus responsive and adaptable to the changing financial conditions in the world markets. While I am not in a position to give concrete proposals here, we do feel that this session provides an appropriate opportunity for scrutinizing the global economic situation and for examining all problems and complications worldwide, thereby avoiding more problematic impacts from which the international community should be saved. This imposes on us the need to work harder, and work together, to face the challenges before us in order to

restore confidence and return stability and normal growth to the global economy.

We strongly condemn the terrorist bombing attacks on the United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, as well as the bombing incident in Cape Town, South Africa. We also deplore the assassination of the Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan. This wave of international terrorism and its rapid growth in an ugly and destructive form puts us all in a position of responsibility where we must work together to secure peace, tranquillity and stability, and employ all the measures that are necessary to the success of our endeavours in combating terrorism. We believe that the measures which are now necessary to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes and those who advocate their commission are brought to justice under the auspices of the United Nations. In this regard, we support the proposal made by the Arab Republic of Egypt and endorsed by the twelfth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held at Durban, South Africa, at the beginning of this month, to convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations in order to work out common arrangements that would express the reaction of the international community to the phenomenon of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

We feel deep regret at the growing situation of famine among nations, which points out the inability of those countries to grow their natural resources owing to the failure of the developed countries to understand the real need for helping these people evolve the frameworks needed to operate and activate their national instrumentalities and to benefit from every assistance given to them. Since a number of United Nations agencies, such as United Nations Development Programme, have become unable to continue offering their expertise due to the shortage of financial resources, several developing countries were affected to the point that the implementation of important economic programmes in those countries has been seriously impeded.

In other regions, ethnic conflicts have threatened to return the human family to the rule of the jungle and the legitimation of minority rule as based on injustice, oppression and a one-man rule, instead of the resort to international law, which is based on justice and equality of rights and common interests. If we look at the root causes, we find that most of the wealth is controlled by a few Governments. This factor is behind the ethnic, political and social conflicts which give rise to all forms of violence and terrorism.

Only 14 months separate us from the next millennium. We had hoped that humankind would celebrate this historic occasion in an atmosphere of political and economic stability, free from violence, terrorism, poverty and "ethnic cleansing". Thus, we should intensify our efforts to fight terrorism and violence in a framework of coordinated international efforts aimed at eradicating these unsettling phenomena, and to ensure that the perpetrators and advocates of such crimes are brought before the courts of justice.

In this context, the Middle East continues to face a very serious political crisis as a result of the stalemate in the peaceful negotiations between the Arab countries and the Israelis under the sponsorship of the United States of America.

The political stagnation caused by the Israeli Government and its non-compliance with the agreements that followed the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference under world sponsorship which led to the historic Oslo accord, and other agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority have, in our view, thwarted world and regional efforts aimed at the restructuring of the Middle East region on the basis of a just and comprehensive peace leading to confidence-building and to hope for peaceful coexistence between the Arabs and the people of Israel.

We cannot but wonder where we stand in relation to this goal. The Israeli Government's plans aim at controlling the Arab lands occupied since 1967. These Israeli policies have hindered the concerted and intensified efforts exerted by the United States as a co-sponsor of the peace process. In addition, this has caused an atmosphere of suspicion to prevail among the Arab States as regards the genuine desire of the Israeli Government for peaceful coexistence and cooperation with the Arabs.

The United Nations has been continuously discussing this issue since 1948 and has adopted many General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Israel has not respected or implemented any of these resolutions, even once. These resolutions include Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which were adopted following the wars of 1967 and 1973. Israel has refused to implement these resolutions through the United Nations, insisting on unilateral negotiations outside the United Nations. The Arab countries responded positively and seriously to the calls for peace from various States by participating in the Madrid Peace Conference. The

Arab countries have responded fully and positively to building a society based on peace in the Middle East. Despite all of this, the Israeli Government now refuses this proposal and continues to occupy and confiscate land in the West Bank.

Is it justice that the world daily witnesses the expulsion of Palestinian citizens from their homes, the demolishing of their homes and the confiscation of their land? Is it justifiable for us to sit and witness the repeated violation by the Israeli authorities of the rights and integrity of the Palestinians through the occupation and the siege of their towns and villages? Where is the just peace that we are talking about when the Israeli Government continues to build new and illegal settlements on Palestinian lands, while the Palestinians themselves are being prevented from building or even repairing their own homes?

These measures are nothing but grave injustice. Can the United Nations condone such practices? Can the peace sponsors accept that? Where is the respect for human rights in the face of this denial of Palestinian rights when we are celebrating this year the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

It is incumbent on all peace-loving nations which call for the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to stand by the Palestinian cause and to reject the policies of the Israeli Government, which persists in trampling over the dignity of the Palestinian people.

The establishment of peace in the Middle East requires the use of every convincing measure in order to make Israel accept and implement its legal and international obligations towards the Palestinian Authority, including withdrawal from the West Bank in accordance with the Oslo, Washington and Cairo accords. Israel also must resume negotiations with the Syrian Government from the point where they ended, with the ultimate goal of signing a peace treaty that will secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Syrian territories to the line of 4 June 1967, as well as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, in accordance with resolutions 425 (1978) and 427 (1978).

We believe that these are the necessary conditions for peace to prevail in the Middle East. They will also provide the legitimate necessary guarantees for Israel and foster an atmosphere of confidence among the Arab and the Israeli peoples.

The Arab countries cannot accept the continued Israeli policy aimed at the Judaization of Arab Jerusalem, and they consider any change in the demographic composition of the Arab city of Jerusalem and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories null and void.

In spite of Israel's intransigence and continued refusal to cooperate with the co-sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East to finalize this process and bring it to a conclusion, my country, believing in the significance and inevitability of peace in this region, declares in this forum its full support of the endeavours made by the co-sponsors, in particular those of the United States. In this regard, I would like to highlight the commendable role of the European Union and its continued economic support for the Palestinian National Authority. I call on the international community to extend every possible assistance to the Palestinian National Authority and its various educational, health and social institutions that will safeguard what is achieved in the context of this peace process.

The decision by the Arab countries to follow the course of peace is a strategic option, and they have genuinely worked towards achieving this purpose based on their belief that for all the peoples of the region, including Israel, peace is required for prosperity and stability. Based on this, the Sultanate of Oman once again affirms its solidarity with the Palestinian people and supports the position of the Palestinian National Authority regarding the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the lands occupied since 1967, thus allowing the Palestinian National Authority to extend its control to all its lands, including the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We stress the necessity for Iraq to fully implement all relevant Security Council resolutions to eliminate its arsenal of all weapons of mass destruction. Fully cognizant of the fact that the United Nations Special Commission has not been able to finalize its inspection, we call for persistent efforts to end the hardship borne by the fraternal Iraqi people. By the same token, we call upon the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to find common ground for cooperation and to build confidence between the Special Commission and the Iraqi Government. We also call upon Iraq to cooperate fully with the ad hoc Tripartite Commission mandated to follow up on the issue of the prisoners of war and missing persons, either Kuwaitis or other nationalities, and to facilitate their release in order to end this tragedy for their families.

In the Gulf region we are witnessing a new era of positive cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We welcome this significant development, which will encourage us to work in a genuine manner to create a propitious climate for enabling the United Arab Emirates to exercise its sovereign rights on the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. Moreover, we should be able to take the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the GCC to a new level of cooperation on the basis of the principle of mutual benefit international law.

The efforts exerted in the field of disarmament aim to ensure international security and stability. My country has always expressed its unqualified support for these efforts. We also emphasize the need for taking practical measures to make the Middle East and the Gulf area zones free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The Sultanate of Oman signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1992 and acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1997. I announce here that my country has decided to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We look forward to seeing Israel take part in the efforts to make the Middle East a region free of nuclear weapons and to seeing it place all its nuclear facilities under the strict control and full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

With regard to the situation in Somalia, my country would like to commend the efforts by Egypt, as well as by Ethiopia and the neighbouring countries, to reconcile the Somalis and to convene a national reconciliation conference. We believe such a conference will help the Somalis rebuild their State in the national interest of the brotherly Somali people. We call upon the United Nations to extend tangible support to these efforts.

As the world celebrates in 1998 the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, the Sultanate of Oman actively participated in the Diplomatic Conference to establish the International Criminal Court, which was held in Rome during June and July. We emphasize the need for this newly established Court to work in harmony and complementarity with national jurisdictions of Member States.

We express our deep concern regarding the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan, which has resulted in the total destruction of that country and has intensified the suffering of its people. It has also had a serious negative impact on the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of this Muslim nation. We call upon all warring factions in Afghanistan to reconcile in a manner that will bring peace and stability to the people. In this regard, we would like to express our support of and appreciation for the initiatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The successive crises in the African continent have demonstrated the complexity of the political, economic and social situation therein. Rescuing Africa requires concerted international efforts to overcome its difficulties. In particular, African countries need international assistance to continue the process of reform and economic development. We believe that unified international action is necessary more than ever to support the United Nations coordination of efforts of the international donor organizations and the efforts on the regional level by the Organization of African Unity and the neighbouring countries in the areas of conflict with a view to promoting development and progress in the African continent.

The current situation in Kosovo and the persecution and killings of the Albanian Muslims and others in this region have been deplored and denounced by the international community. We condemn the use of terrorism and violence in international relations as a mean to resolve political differences. We call for the containment and just settlement of this crisis.

While realizing the national reasons why India and Pakistan each carried out its latest nuclear tests, we continue to call upon the two neighbouring countries to promptly sign the NPT and CTBT in order to prevent the escalation of the arms race in other regions of the world. We hope that the circumstances will allow them to do so.

As the United Nations plays its role to eliminate all lethal weapons from this globe, my country would like to commend the international efforts that have led to the adoption in December 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This achievement should alleviate the sufferings and spare the lives of thousands of innocent civilians who might fall victim to this kind of weapon.

In the context of preserving the environment, the Sultanate of Oman has submitted a proposal to the regional organization for the protection of marine life in

the Gulf to establish bunkering ports for oil tankers in order to protect the territorial waters and preserve the marine life in the region from pollution.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the economic front, the current situation has had a negative impact on economic growth in Oman, just as it has elsewhere in the world. But Oman is determined to proceed with its plans for economic diversification and harmonization with the regional and international economic environment.

On the national level, Oman has carried out the policies, legislation and other measures conducive to foreign investment, based on the principles of a market economy. At the regional level, my country participates actively in regional economic gatherings. Within the GCC, and thanks to the spirit of partnership among member States and the economic integration legislation, the rates of growth in the non-oil sectors have substantially increased. In the Indian Ocean Rim Association for regional cooperation, my country is an active participant in efforts to promote and invigorate economic trade cooperation. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the investment by the Sultanate of Oman in infrastructure projects such as the port of Raysut in the southern region of Oman, Dhofar. This port will offer services to container ships and will enhance international maritime trade and transport in our region.

At the international level, my country is working towards membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and we are fully committed to taking the necessary steps to assure our full participation and responsibilities within that organization.

The Sultanate of Oman thus works in a diligent and cooperative manner to promote the development of economic relations with other nations and with regional and international groupings for mutual benefit and the promotion of international trade and investment.

The Sultanate of Oman stands ready to extend the hand of friendship to all peace-loving nations.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, His Excellency Mr. Shanmugam Jayakumar.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): Singapore was delighted to see Mr. Didier Opertti unanimously elected as the fifty-third President of the United Nations General Assembly. As this century draws to a close, the world is experiencing dramatic changes. We live in an era of great uncertainties. At this crucial juncture, we are delighted that a distinguished man of letters and man of law from a fellow small State has assumed this distinguished office. We would also like to place on record our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his able stewardship of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

In the last two decades, the world has changed. The growth of international institutions, cross-border trade and investment, the opening up of markets, the advent of instant communication — all these have altered the face of the world. From the Americas to Europe to the Middle East, to Africa and to Asia, no country has been untouched by the forces of globalization. The expansion of global economic activity has forced globalization onto the agendas of United Nations Members. At one point or another, we have all asked how our peoples could benefit from globalization and wondered how our nations could be better plugged into the global economic grid. Keen international interest at the United Nations about globalization was also evident from the active participation of many Member States in the high-level dialogue on the impact of globalization held last week on the fringes of the General Assembly.

At that dialogue, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that there was no subject more important than globalization. I agree. The long-term benefits deriving from the free trade of goods and services and from the free flow of capital and information are generally accepted.

In the last year the desirability of a freer flow of capital has been severely questioned. When the currency crisis erupted in South-East Asia, some expected the crisis to blow over quickly. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Economic problems quickly developed into full-scale social problems, which in turn became political problems. The crisis has since spread from South-East Asia to North-East Asia, Russia and even Latin America. Even as we speak, it laps at the shores of America and Europe. What started out as a national problem has ballooned into a regional problem, and it is fast threatening to become a global crisis.

The United Nations cannot avoid coming to grips with globalization. Events in East Asia over the last year have caused enthusiasm for this phenomenon to give way to uncertainty about its value. The questions foremost in our minds are: is globalization good for us? How do we prevent ourselves from being hurt by it? We are all groping for answers. The challenge for us is whether we are able to draw the right lessons from recent events.

On the whole, globalization has done a lot of good. The process has enhanced the free flow of goods and services, capital and information; it has spurred innovation and competition and has lifted hundreds of million of people out of poverty. East Asia has enjoyed two decades of unprecedented economic growth. Our landscape has been radically transformed. Financial centres have replaced sleepy villages. Lifestyles which were a dream for our parents are a reality for us. Our cities are increasingly plugged into the world information superhighway. Less than 10 years ago, letters would have taken at least a week to cross the globe. Today, with the advent of electronic mail, it takes seconds. We can now chat "real-time" on the Internet. Initially, the Internet was used mainly in developed countries. Increasingly, it has spread its wings around the globe.

Dialogue and cooperation between countries have improved as the countries found issues of common interest and more areas of interdependence. Isolated economies have joined hands to form regional economic groupings and to promote regional prosperity. Look how the globalization of information has helped the work of the United Nations itself. Today, anyone with a computer and modem can gain electronic access to over 360,000 official documents of the United Nations, dating back to 1947. The complete list of United Nations peacekeeping operations, including potential training programmes, is available on-line. More crucially, the Organization's "Relief Web" provides situation reports on humanitarian relief efforts in disaster areas around the world, along with instant information on how individuals and Governments can contribute to specific humanitarian operations. One major force of globalization, the Internet, has tied all of us together, very much like a global family.

But, like any man-made phenomenon, globalization inevitably creates some problems. Some countries have been made more vulnerable by the opening up of their economies to the global market. Control has now passed largely into the hands of thousands of money traders who can move billions of dollars across boundaries with a single click of a computer mouse. Effectively, there is now no real force that can stop them.

As the former Chairman of Citibank, Mr. Walter Wriston, noted in a recent article:

> "When I started in the banking business, the total foreign exchange market in New York was only about $50 million. If the Federal Reserve called Citibank or Chase and instructed them to sell $10 million, an order that size could move the markets. Today, that market is $1 trillion and Central Bank intervention in foreign exchange becomes an exercise in futility."

In today's CNN world, live images are transmitted from one end of the globe to another as events unfold. Perceptions can be changed, emotions stoked and confidence irrecoverably shaken within minutes. This exerts greater pressures on Governments, on businesses and even on peoples to respond, rationally or otherwise.

The way ahead is not to turn our backs on globalization. This is no longer a viable or realistic option. To repudiate globalization will hurt our long-term growth prospects. It is vital to remind ourselves in this crisis that the tremendous economic growth that much of the world has experienced since the Second World War has been the result of the free trade in goods and services encouraged since the formation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1947. There is an overwhelming consensus among economists that we should continue to push ahead on this front, despite the fact that protectionism has once again reared its ugly head. If we try to turn the clock back and walk away from free trade, the impact will not just be domestic nor will it be merely economic.

Domestic political pressures can find regional and international outlets. The prosperity resulting from open markets has provided a foundation for national stability and regional and global peace and security. If countries cannot get access to the raw materials, goods and services they need through peaceful and open competition, they will resort to other means. Economic rivalries can have political and military consequences. A return to global tensions cannot be ruled out, but we must avoid it. The core interests of the United Nations — the maintenance of peace and security — may be endangered. The only way forward is to find solutions to deal with the vulnerabilities created by globalization.

At the domestic level, we must promote higher standards of national government by strengthening our regulatory and supervisory frameworks, improving

corporate governance, increasing transparency and lessening government interference in market decisions. We need to put in place sound macroeconomic policies and build strong regulatory structures to make our economies more resilient.

On the international front, the United Nations can play a leading role in the international effort to help countries reap the benefits of globalization. We should encourage the developed world to assume the primary responsibility for bringing the world out of this crisis. There should be greater dialogue and partnership between the developing and developed world to ensure that globalization benefits every country. Globalization should bring security and confidence, not greater vulnerability, to our people.

United Nations Members have a common interest in revitalizing and reforming the major multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The United Nations, for its part, has prevented the scourge of another world war. The IMF, World Bank and WTO have overseen a great burst of economic expansion of a size never seen before in the history of man. Together with other key United Nations agencies, they have made significant contributions to development efforts and to poverty alleviation. However, recent developments have shown that these institutions have their weaknesses. They should be reformed, but not destroyed.

So, we at the United Nations can play a constructive role in this process. As Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan said at the high-level dialogue recently, the United Nations has

> "A unique and indispensable role to play. Our broad mandate, our universal membership and our ability to involve non-State actors all make the United Nations uniquely well equipped to help forge a global response to the crisis, which is global not only in the geographical sense, but also in the range of issues that it raises." (*A/53/PV.6*)

I am glad that one clear conclusion of the high-level dialogue on globalization was, as the Secretary-General reiterated in his closing remarks, the need for the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions to now work together as equal members of the same team. In my view, we will also have to work together to deal with the new challenges which were not anticipated when the Bretton Woods institutions were set up in 1944.

We stand at a critical juncture of international discourse. As we approach the twenty-first century, paradigms that have brought us wealth and peace in the last half-century are now being questioned. The temptation to take the easiest route — to close our doors on globalization — is very great, but the quickest route is not necessarily the right or best route.

We can begin by holding full discussions on this issue. A good start was made at the recent high-level dialogue. Many good ideas have been raised. We should continue this process in order to come up with a global understanding of the challenges and to formulate a global response. I am pleased to learn that preparations have already begun for the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000. Many questions will certainly be discussed then, but I dare say that no question may be more pressing than the challenge of globalization.

Address by The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, His Excellency The Honourable Said Musa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Musa (Belize): The election of the Foreign Minister of Uruguay as President of this General Assembly is very gratifying to our delegation and we are sure that his enormous talents and experience will guide us effectively through this critical session.

We also wish to acknowledge the contribution of his predecessor for the admirable guidance he provided the Assembly over the past year.

The inspired work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has brought new life and meaning to the United Nations, and we are grateful to him for his dedication to the task of modernizing the Organization. The commitment to ongoing reform and renewal in this

Organization and the new vision and energy injected by the Secretary-General have resulted in a revitalized institution that offers new hope.

In like fashion, the Belizean people demonstrated their political maturity when they turned out in record numbers a month ago to elect a Government committed to setting a new and higher standard of governance to take them through to the next millennium. We regard the overwhelming mandate given to our new Administration as a directive to transform our institutions and political culture into more democratic, open and just instruments for the welfare of all our people.

The work of reform and renewal is never-ending. With regard to the reform of the Security Council, while we agree that this is urgently needed, we wish to urge all Members to make every effort to ensure that the Working Group produces a final package for the consideration of this Assembly.

It is to the credit of the United Nations that many more people in today's world benefit from a culture of democracy and the rule of law. The United Nations has set the pace in providing the support necessary to build and consolidate the institutions of democracy. Central to this achievement has been the fact that the economic, cultural and social aspects which underpin democracy have not been ignored.

Perhaps the most powerful instrument for promoting democracy has been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we celebrate this year. This basic document has been fortified over the years by other commitments relating to second-, third- and fourth-generation rights and to the rights of children, women and indigenous people. Taken together, these commitments constitute a challenge which we are all called upon to live up to.

Belize is committed to pursue policies that lead to an economic and social climate which nurtures the development of our children and offers real opportunities to our young people to be creative and productive and to develop self-respect, self-reliance and a sense of belonging to a community.

Our Government recognizes the value of education in promoting gender awareness and improving the economic situation of women, upon whom poverty casts a disproportionate burden. Our policies for greater employment, education in non-traditional areas and microcredit facilities will all be driven by gender awareness to foster greater access and opportunity for Belizean women.

The International Decade of the World's Indigenous People has served to raise public consciousness of the plight of peoples who for centuries have been disadvantaged, exploited and marginalized. Our Government takes seriously its duty to tangibly improve the quality of daily life for indigenous people and will engage in respectful negotiations with them in regard to their concerns about land, natural resources and other matters.

The United Nations decolonization programme has been hailed as one of the most successful of the Organization's undertakings over the past decades. However, enjoyment of the fundamental right to self-determination is still denied to the people of Western Sahara and East Timor. Belize will continue to support the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization to ensure that these people are afforded opportunities for the full expression of their will.

This year presents us with a telling irony: even as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, we are painfully reminded that it is also the fiftieth anniversary of the dispossession of the Palestinian people. We continue to press for the full recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent State, respecting the independence and security of all the States in that region.

We are likewise concerned about the fact that a sister Caribbean nation continues to suffer from a policy designed to isolate it, even as it continues to be the target of terrorist attacks. The most fundamental human rights of the Cuban people are thus being violated, and we urge all concerned to work together with us in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and in the Association of Caribbean States to bring an end to this situation.

Belize supports the efforts of the Republic of China on Taiwan to participate fully in the work of this Organization and its organs, as well as in international financial and developmental institutions. The time has come for us to respect the sovereign will of that population, in conformity with the universalist principles of our Charter.

We all know that it is meaningless to talk about human rights without addressing the fact that millions of people are falling into poverty even as incredible advances in science and technology make possible the eradication of poverty. This tells us that something is terribly wrong about the way the world economy is managed. If some resisted this conclusion before, the instability of the present world financial markets is surely proof enough that unbridled globalization can have serious negative effects on developing and developed countries alike.

We must move resolutely to create a new and fair management regime for the world economy. We support the proposed United Nations conference on financing for development, which should include consideration of social factors and should seek to bring about comprehensive reform of the international financial system.

I speak for a country which has seen its prospective base of prosperity whittled away over the past few years by misguided economic policies, predatory politics and financial mismanagement. Our Administration has inherited a country where some 40 per cent of the people live in poverty, where almost half of its children do not complete primary school and where preventable diseases and infant mortality are on the rise. We have committed ourselves to an intensive integrated programme aimed at the elimination of poverty, based on growth economics that will restore investor confidence, stimulate economic activity and employment and bring about more revenue for development.

But the stark reality is that no matter how hard we try, we cannot do it alone. We are, therefore, especially encouraged by the words of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, spoken to this Assembly a week ago, at the 7th meeting:

> "If we want to eradicate poverty, we also need to ensure that the least developed countries benefit from this global economy ... [by] letting them sell their goods without imposing tariffs on them ... actively helping them benefit from globalization ... [and] rejecting any false allure of protectionism ... We also have to ease the debt burden on the poorest countries."

In this connection, we emphatically endorse the call of the Durban Summit of Non-Aligned Countries for new concessional financial flows to debtor developing countries, in addition to debt cancellation and other debt relief measures.

We are also witnessing progressive decreases in the amount of aid flowing to the developing countries. And too often we are victims of a trend in international agencies of spending millions on endless studies and consultancies, when what we need are concrete actions to solve the problems we long ago identified.

We certainly welcome the work being done by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the protection of our environment. Our population depends on its forests and clean seas to survive. The pristine condition of our natural resources affords us a competitive advantage as a prime destination for eco-tourism, and their rational management and use is the only guarantee for our sustainable development.

Yet we have witnessed the wanton destruction of forests by transnational corporations and the depletion of marine life by galloping consumption that is heedless of the fragility of our ecosystems and of the social consequences. The 1998 Human Development Report concludes that gross inequalities in consumption have prevented over 1 billion people from meeting their basic consumption requirements, a conclusion which led the report's coordinator, Richard Jolly, to call for patterns of consumption that are socially responsible, are not destructive of the well-being of others, are sustainable and do not degrade the natural resource base and environment for present and future generations.

As if the uneven effects of the globalization of the world economy were not enough to try us, we are faced with the even more destructive phenomenon of the globalization of crime and mindless violence, especially as manifested through the increased use of and trafficking in drugs and money-laundering. My country is in the unfortunate position of being along the way of the transit trade to the country of greatest demand, and we daily suffer the consequences in the ruined lives of our youth and the increased incidence of crime. We are doing everything possible to fight this scourge of mankind and will cooperate fully with all regional and international efforts aimed at the effective curbing of the drug trade and its insidiously corrupting effects on our institutions and way of life.

A world free of the curse of drugs, liberated from the affliction of poverty, blessed with freedom and democracy where people's human right to a full and dignified life can be pursued in peace: this, surely, is what we are all striving for. Belize pledges to play its part in that glorious struggle, even as we ask the United

Nations to continue to support the independence and territorial integrity of our nation, whose people, like human beings everywhere, seek only to assert their absolute and inalienable right to human dignity.

In this search, we all need a vital and effective United Nations — this unique expression of our common humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Gatti (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Republic of San Marino and on my own behalf, I wish, first of all, to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election as President of the General Assembly and to wish him all success in his work. I also wish to assure him and the Secretary-General of the full support of my Government for their unceasing and valuable efforts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for his work as President during the last session of the General Assembly.

1998 is an historic year for our Organization. We are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has always been, and today remains, a milestone for democracy and for the safeguard of the inalienable rights of human beings.

The Republic of San Marino, during the more than 16 centuries of its existence, has always promoted respect for human rights. Today more than ever before, the principles contained in the Declaration represent the essence of a civilized way of living together in modern society.

Therefore my Government decided to finance the project of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled "Global Dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". This project aims at making the Declaration accessible and understandable to a wider number of people, by preparing a compendium of translations of this important text into 250 of the world's most widely spoken languages. With this small but meaningful gesture, San Marino wishes to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration and to make a contribution to the dissemination of the fundamental humanitarian principles contained therein.

Experience has taught us, at a high cost, that where there is no peace, there is no respect for human rights. I believe the United Nations should play an active role in the maintenance of peace, especially where it is weakest and most precarious. This is vitally important. It should be the personal responsibility of every human being to carry out his or her own duty in the context of the international community.

Sadly, we have recently once again confronted another dramatic issue: the problem of terrorism. We must all cooperate to prevent it from spreading any farther. We must combat terrorism and condemn it, always and by all possible means.

Nuclear tests in the Asian region are a new and worrying problem, one that is going to be characteristic our era. This problem could represent the beginning of a new season of anxiety and danger for all mankind if the international community, and the United Nations in particular, is unable to prevent it. The Republic of San Marino, like many other States, is against any initiative aimed at provoking an escalation of the nuclear threat and will do all in its power to prevent this from happening. Our generation, and the ones to come, must not know these fears or the destructive ambitions that could annihilate our entire planet.

Unfortunately, in our opinion the present international legal instruments have proven insufficient to fight the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This proliferation has taken on a new profile because of the will to acquire a more influential and prestigious position at the national and international levels, while the peaceful and constructive uses of this energy are forgotten or deliberately denied.

My country deems that the United Nations must lead the international community to strengthen those instruments capable of preventing and repressing international crimes which until now have merely been the object of moral condemnation. With this in mind, our Republic took part in the Diplomatic Conference on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court in Rome

last June and July. San Marino contributed to the work of the Conference because it is convinced that such a court could represent an effective and strong deterrent to crimes against peoples or any ethnic group. The court established by this Conference will represent not only a hope for but also an instrument of protection for the victims of oppression, as well as a point of reference for all those who believe in the absolute value of justice and in respect for human beings.

San Marino follows with particular attention the debate on the death penalty. Our civil and cultural consciousness entitles us to do so. In 1865, San Marino became the first country in Europe to abolish capital punishment, though in fact it had not been applied for centuries. The Government and people of San Marino deeply believe that death imposed by law cannot represent a valid protection for society, nor can it be a deterrent to crime.

Our criminal code, in which sanctions have a rehabilitative as well as a punitive function, rejects capital punishment, defining it as "a residual of vindictive justice". For these reasons, I wish to express the support of the Republic of San Marino for all initiatives that, like the resolution adopted this year by the Commission on Human Rights, aim at the abolition or limitation of the death penalty.

The nations of the world differ geographically, ethnically, economically and culturally, but all of them have a common substantial and undeniable responsibility towards young people. If we are not able today to put an end to wars and poverty, future generations will have to fight arduous and complex battles arising from the degeneration and wounds that currently afflict humanity, as it moves towards the third millennium.

It is a question not only of doing away with age-old geopolitical imbalances but, and primarily, of rediscovering values and principles that are capable of offering all people of the world, and especially young people, the cultural means to fight for freedom, development and mutual understanding. That is a challenge based on solidarity and personal values. Given that perspective, San Marino considers the moral and professional growth of young people to be a priority. Our school system is based on personal development, focuses on the job market and respect for environment and encourages young people to take part in the social lives of their communities.

The need for reform in the United Nations is a concept widely shared by all Members of this Organization, thanks in particular to the input of the Secretary-General, who started a slow but irreversible process which will lead to the rationalization and updating of all its principal organs. Some of those reforms, such as the reform of the Security Council, must, because of their significance, be approved by consensus only — a consensus that sadly is yet to be reached. We have confidence in the steadfast commitment of the President of the General Assembly and in his substantial role in leading the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council to an equitable and unanimous solution that fully respects the principles of the Charter.

San Marino is among those countries that are strongly convinced of the need for reform so as to guarantee for the United Nations the functions and the role that form the basis of its nature and its existence. We are absolutely aware of how important it is for the Organization to strengthen its presence and its prestige, which derive from more than 50 years of activity in the service of peace and the protection of human rights. We are moreover convinced that this noble mandate has today its own *raison d'être*, and that it must be supported with determination, consistency and loyalty. We should also have the courage and humility to be able to give up something in the name of the higher interest of all countries and all peoples who form part of the international community.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha, on whom I now call.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset, Sir, to extend to Mr. Opertti my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We are confident that his political perspicacity and wide knowledge of international affairs will guarantee the success of the work of this Assembly. His election is an acknowledgement by the international community of the active role that his friendly country, Uruguay, is playing at both the regional and the international level for the establishment and enhancement of cooperation between peoples and the consecration of the universal principles of peace and justice.

I should also like to extend to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, my warmest thanks and

appreciation for the competence and dedication he demonstrated in discharging his responsibility in order to strengthen the foundations of change and structural reform of our international Organization so as to enable it to enter the next century with the necessary efficiency and effectiveness.

I also wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuous and dedicated efforts to strengthen and restructure the Organization and for his eagerness to bolster international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The last decade of the twentieth century has been characterized by fiftieth anniversary celebrations commemorating the creation of many international institutions, including the United Nations. As the international community moves towards the twenty-first century, it is called upon to evaluate its accomplishments in giving effect to the principles and goals of the United Nations and in delineating the contours of the future with a view to ensuring security, peace and development for all the peoples of the world.

In this regard, ensuring a better world for future generations — a world in which security, justice, stability and prosperity for all prevail — remains the highest common goal, whose achievement requires efforts by all. This requires the international community to show an unwavering determination and to sustain efforts to establish a world order, built by all States, consolidating the objectives and principles of the United Nations and fulfilling the spirit and the letter of the Charter, on the basis of international legitimacy and the principles of democracy, equality and equity among States.

The new approach adopted by the international community in the process of reform, which covers all United Nations structures and fields of activity, offers an opportunity for consolidating the principle of democracy as a basis for international relations. In this connection, Tunisia attaches great importance to strengthening the role and prerogatives of the General Assembly in all the areas of its competence as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to the development and maintenance of international peace and security.

We wish to emphasize once again the need to revitalize and enhance the role of the General Assembly, given its universality, representativeness and democratic character. Strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly should go hand in hand with the reform of the Security Council so as to confirm the principles of transparency, pluralism and democracy. These are values which should prevail in international relations and guide the activities of our Organization and its various bodies, including the Security Council, in order to enhance and develop its role in the maintenance of international peace and security, which, in recent years, has become increasingly important.

Just as we expect the Security Council to act effectively and to fulfil its mission in the best way possible, we also stress the need to give that body a globally representative character that takes into account the interests of developing countries and reflects the reality of the world following the end of the cold war by expanding its membership to include all regional groups. In this respect, we stress our support for the request of the Group of African States, reaffirmed at the Ouagadougou summit, which calls for the allocation of two permanent seats to be occupied on a rotational basis by States from Africa, with the enjoyment of the same privileges as those of the current holders of permanent seats.

However, the process of Security Council reform should not be limited to restructuring that body. The rationalization of the Council's working methods is needed so as to strengthen and consolidate one of the Charter's most important principles, that of compliance with and respect for international legitimacy by all. In this connection, we emphasize the need to review the veto right, whose use should be confined to the areas covered by Chapter VII of the Charter.

We also believe that the sanctions regime practised by the Security Council should be reviewed to ensure the protection of populations, prevent their suffering and guarantee their right to development and to a life of dignity, and take into account the interests of neighbouring countries which have economic and commercial relations with the country targeted for sanctions. A specified time-frame should also be set up for the implementation and lifting of sanctions. In this connection, we stress the necessity of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and of implementing the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including those resolutions dealing with Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons.

As we pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts to contain the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations Special

Commission, we call upon him to increase his efforts and to undertake the required initiative for a comprehensive review of the situation with a view to finding a solution acceptable to all parties which would accelerate the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the brotherly Iraqi people.

Regarding the Lockerbie issue, Tunisia has expressed optimism over the recent developments, which could accelerate the achievement of a just and satisfactory settlement of this issue, taking into account the willingness demonstrated by the brotherly country of Libya and other concerned parties to deal in a positive manner with the ideas already put forward. We encourage all parties to move ahead in that direction so that the embargo imposed on the brotherly Libyan people can be lifted.

With respect to the Middle East peace process, Tunisia has since the very beginning supported and worked relentlessly for its success. We wish once again to express our deep concern about the present status of the process. We warned that setbacks and deadlocks would result from Israel's continued policy of fait accompli and its refusal to honour its commitments and to implement the agreements that were concluded.

We believe that it will not be possible to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East question without Israel's compliance with international legitimacy represented by the relevant United Nations resolutions and based on the principles outlined in the Madrid process, particularly that of "land for peace".

Tunisia, which supports the just Palestinian cause, welcomes the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its last session enhancing the status of Palestine as observer at the United Nations. We hope that this step will soon be followed by international recognition of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

Increased efforts by the international community to consolidate democratic relations among States and to strengthen international legitimacy in the conduct of world affairs are imperative for the foundation of a balanced international order that guarantees a better life for future generations and promotes conditions of stability in the security, economic and social dimensions.

With regard to security, many regions of the world continue to be torn by war and conflicts, and their populations still endure suffering and tragedies due to the absence of stability and security. In our view, the best solution to these problems is to pre-empt crises through preventive diplomacy so as to eliminate their causes in the fastest and most effective way. The international community has successfully adopted this right approach and has been able to contain a number of conflicts through mediation, good offices and other peaceful means.

The United Nations has also achieved considerable successes in the context of peacekeeping operations in many parts of the world, enabling it to contain conflicts either by interposing itself between the belligerents or by supervising the conclusion of peace agreements or by following up on their implementation. In addition, the United Nations has intensified cooperation with regional organizations within the framework of respect for the national sovereignty and political independence of States, and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Nevertheless, these efforts remain insufficient, given the challenges that persist in many regions of the world, in particular, the African continent. Africa continues to face difficulties and diverse problems which are increasing its burden and hindering its efforts to achieve stability and development.

In this respect, Tunisia has welcomed the Security Council's initiative regarding the situation in Africa. We believe that the Secretary-General's report in this regard was well timed, expressing concern about the situation and offering help to the African continent to find solutions capable of enhancing its security and development.

We hope that this orientation will be confirmed by continued United Nations support for the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity through adoption of practical measures designed to help the integration of African States in the world economy.

We believe that a lasting peace can be established only through total dismantling weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, whose formidable arsenals constitute a continued threat to humanity. It has become clear that the current nuclear non-proliferation regime cannot by itself eliminate the danger that the arms race poses to humanity with its ominous implications. Therefore it has become imperative that the international community increase its efforts to adopt practical measures aiming at eliminating all

weapons of mass destruction, without exception, and banning their proliferation and stockpiling.

While working towards that objective, the international community should strenuously endeavour to ensure the safety of non-nuclear States and to prohibit the use and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and peoples of those States. We also emphasize the need for creating nuclear-weapon-free zones so as to put an end to continued threats to the security of countries and to open new vistas for the establishment of peace, security and stability throughout the world. In this context, Tunisia calls for the urgent creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, considering that all the countries of the region except Israel have adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to conventional weapons, we express our satisfaction at the signing at Ottawa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Tunisia hastened to sign that Convention, believing that an end should be put to the great suffering that unarmed civilians are enduring because of these weapons. Hence, the necessary legal measures are being taken for Tunisia's ratification of the Convention.

We believe that peace and security cannot be established in the world without achieving economic and social development and ensuring conditions of well-being and dignified living for all peoples.

Meeting the major challenges confronting developing countries starts with the establishment of a world economic order founded on equality and solidarity so as to enable developing countries to be integrated in the world economy and to attract the required flow of capital and direct investment needed to support their development efforts.

The financial crisis that certain developing countries are experiencing confirms our belief that the economic globalization in which we have placed high hopes has, despite its positive aspects, negative repercussions on the world economy, particularly on the stability of the economies of developing countries.

We call upon the international community and all United Nations agencies, in cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, to speed up taking the necessary measures that will overcome the negative aspects of globalization. Therefore, we support the search for effective multilateral mechanisms to control international capital flows and monetary fluctuations in order to ensure fair competition and to organize financial transactions on sound and solid bases. In this context, my country supports the initiative taken by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to establish a high-level mechanism of consultation between the Movement and the Group of Eight most industrialized countries.

We also believe that in the absence of a radical solution to the debt problem, efforts to liberalize the economies of developing countries will remain insufficient. In this regard, I would like to recall the proposal made by Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, with respect to finding a solution to the problem of external debt by applying those debts to the implementation of environmental, social and other priority projects in developing countries.

Working for the adjustment of the globalization process is not, in our opinion, limited to the pivotal role played by international organizations and financial institutions. Increasing efforts at the national and regional levels are also needed. In this context, Tunisia has striven to make its financial structures more efficient and to strengthen the factors of sustainable development through concentrating on the enhancement of human energies, establishing the state of law and institutions, protecting human rights and public freedom and strengthening democracy, which is based on the participation of civil society with all its components in decision-making.

Aware of the importance of economic and geographic groupings in advancing the economies of developing countries, promoting man and facing the challenges of globalization, Tunisia has adopted a comprehensive strategy that reconciles the imperatives of security and the requirements of cooperation with economic complementarity and solidarity among States. That strategy is also based on strengthening the Maghreb area, establishing partnership with the European Union through the creation of a free trade zone and consolidating its relations with all countries, particularly those of Africa.

The international conferences which have been held in recent years, particularly the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Beijing Conference on Women and the Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development, have enabled the international community to develop coherent plans of action, addressing many

social problems which still hinder the progress, the stability and the security of peoples.

Tunisia calls for increased efforts to ensure full implementation and genuine follow-up of the decisions, recommendations and plans of action adopted by those conferences and for the necessary measures to apply them.

While we recognize the responsibility of States in implementing economic policies which ensure the right of their citizens to development, we also emphasize the need to establish equitable international economic relations which take into account the right of all countries, particularly developing countries, to comprehensive and sustainable development. We also call upon United Nations organs, funds, programmes and specialized agencies to shoulder their responsibilities and help developing countries carry out their economic programmes.

The continued shrinkage of resources allocated for United Nations economic and social activities is a matter of concern to us. Therefore, we call again for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions stressing the need to provide additional funds for development. We also urge the international community, and particularly rich countries, to honour their commitments so as to give impetus to their efforts in the area of economic and social development.

The year 1998 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This coincides with the start of the evaluation of the follow-up of the recommendations adopted at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. We believe that the international community should take this ideal opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights as well as to develop a clear plan in this regard for the future.

Tunisia takes note with satisfaction of the pioneering role played by the United Nations in promoting human rights, a matter which is in the forefront of its priorities, in accordance with an approach based on a comprehensive and coherent vision of those rights. Tunisia has contributed to the formulation of that approach. Nevertheless, we feel that these achievements are not enough. Poverty and exclusion continue to disrupt social stability in many countries. These are phenomena which also threaten the gains made in the field of human rights and constitute challenges which should be met with the required efficiency and effectiveness. The international community should, in our opinion, confirm the values of tolerance and disseminate them as a basic platform for promoting human rights and deepening the culture of human rights among societies throughout the world.

We also emphasize that great importance should be given to the right to development and the need to remove all obstacles to the effective exercise of that right.

In implementing its social and economic policy, Tunisia has adopted a comprehensive and integrated strategy aimed at the advancement of human beings. It has worked to honour all the commitments it has made by adhering to human rights conventions. At the initiative of the President of the Republic, many amendments to enact legislation have been introduced with a view to strengthening democracy and pluralism, promoting and safeguarding human rights, disseminating the culture of human rights, strengthening national institutions and mechanisms working in this field and protecting individual and group liberties as well as the rights of women and the child.

In the area of social and economic development, Tunisia has increased its efforts to ensure a dignified life for members of all social sectors. It has focused its policy in this field on the enhancement of social integration, the struggle against poverty and the promotion of employment for all. In formulating its policy, Tunisia has been eager to involve all components of civil society in defining a comprehensive strategy and in taking necessary measures to carry out programmes of economic and social development.

Social solidarity is one of the pillars of Tunisia's policy in combating poverty and all forms of exclusion. The National Solidarity Fund, set up in 1992 at the initiative of the President of the Republic and subsequently reinforced by the creation of the Tunisian Solidarity Bank, has provided funds for many projects for low-income groups and has made possible the integration of underprivileged regions into the national economy.

With respect to the consolidation of its employment policy, Tunisia recently formulated a comprehensive strategy manifested in the adoption of a national declaration on employment. That declaration was drafted following broad consultations in which all the country's active forces took part; this was signed by all of our political parties, trade unions and professional associations.

Tunisia's approach to the formulation and implementation of its economic and social policy is based

on the conviction that the phenomena of exclusion, marginalization and social discrimination create threats to the very foundations of stability and security, which are essential for the progress and prosperity of peoples. The struggle against those phenomena is the most appropriate means for eradicating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, organized crime and drug-trafficking.

In that connection, we once again urge the international community to increase its efforts to combat terrorism by setting up a global strategy and taking the necessary legal measures to contain and uproot that phenomenon.

Increased international awareness of the great danger of the drug phenomenon, which was illustrated in the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in June 1998 on the common struggle against drugs, encourages us to support the efforts being made by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to formulate a draft United Nations framework convention against organized crime. We hope that these efforts will succeed, for the international community is in urgent need of such an instrument.

In the same context, Tunisia welcomes the recommendations of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held recently in Lisbon, and stresses the need to ensure that the implementation of the decisions taken at that conference is followed up. This will allow us to deal with the concerns of young people, develop their sense of responsibility and properly prepare them to assume the responsibility of managing tomorrow's world.

The Diplomatic Conference held at Rome in June and July 1998 on the creation of the International Criminal Court and the extensive participation of Member States and non-governmental organizations in that Conference, testify to the great importance we all accord to the creation of such a court, whose task will be to deal with heinous crimes against humanity and to punish their perpetrators.

Tunisia participated in the Conference and voted in favour of the statute of the Court. While expressing satisfaction at the agreement reached on the creation of the Court, we would like to stress once again the importance of ensuring its independence and neutrality. Given the need to respect the principle of national sovereignty, Tunisia supports the consensus reached on the complementary character of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and on the need to accord priority to national legal systems, which should retain the initiative of prosecution.

We look forward to the advent of the new century with high hopes, and we call upon all States to evaluate what we have achieved so as to pursue joint action, to confront remaining challenges and to spare humanity from suffering like that which it has endured throughout the current century. This is a task that requires firm political will from all of us in order to meet the aspirations of our peoples to security, stability, growth and cooperation.

Our devotion to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the consolidation of international legality and democratic practice among nations, and the implementation of the process of the reform of the United Nations system to serve those principles and goals are undoubtedly the best means by which to lay the foundations of a better world, a world which we shall shape and build together for future generations.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.